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Illinois Wesleyan To Celebrate 250th Birthday of Goethe

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.-- At 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 23, Illinois Wesleyan University will commemorate the 250th birthday of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. A free festival in the university's Evelyn Chapel, located at 1301 N. Park St., Bloomington, will honor the life and literary achievements of one of the most enduring and versatile European writers of all time.

The Goethe Festival originated when Professor of German Julie Prandi and Chair of the Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures department Marina Balina developed an idea to pay tribute to an artist who is still influencing the modern worlds of literature and music.

"For a man who died in 1832, Goethe is a modern person in his worldview," says Prandi. "Although he was a master of the German language, he looked toward a world culture. He wrote universally for people everywhere."

Prandi believes that Goethe's ability to write in various styles allows him to withstand literary trends and remain an influential author nearly two centuries after his death.

"He can be extremely concrete and visual in his work," she explains. "Or you can explore his writing with more depth on many different levels."

During the Goethe Festival, Evelyn Chapel will come alive with dramatic interpretations of many of Goethe's most lyrical poetry and touching romantic dramas.

David Getzin '02, a theater major from Wausau, Wis., and Jennifer Price '00, a psychology major from Countryside, Ill., will don period costumes to perform scenes from Goethe's *Faust* in German, while other students will recite selections of the artist's

poetry in English. IWU Study Abroad Coordinator Petra Visscher will also deliver a talk on "Goethe in Weimar, A European Cultural City."

Adding a musical touch to the festival, Carren Moham, associate professor of voice, will sing operatic pieces based on Goethe's poetry and text, many of which she performed in October 1999 at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

"Goethe's writing has an element of drama which musicians and composers love," says Moham. "His poetry is so singable, and he wrote in a way that is easy to set to music."

Moham's musical selections will include *L'Altra Notte Nin Fondo Al Mare*, a dramatic soprano aria by the Italian composer Boito, and *Das Veilchen* by Mozart, which Moham describes as "cute but tragic."

Prandi hopes that the festival audience will arrive willing to learn more about Goethe's influence in the realms of art and music, and his life as a controversial figure in 18th-century Europe.

Goethe Biography

Goethe was born in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1749. As a young man, he attended the universities of Leipzig and Strasbourg, where he first developed an interest in literature. For a short time he also practiced law in Strasbourg and became a leading critic of the burgeoning industrial revolution in Europe.

Goethe's sentimental and unique writing style emerged in his most popular works, such as *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *Faust* and *Goetz of Berlichingen*. He is credited with introducing new literary forms such as the novella, and for popularizing lyrical poetry. Goethe's works remain well-respected for their clever usage of humor and irony. Goethe created controversy in his own era by shunning such conventions as formalism and literary correctness.

Although he was one of the most profound influences on the literary romanticism movement, Goethe was equally as celebrated for his substantial contributions to biology and to the history and philosophy of science. He was an early sociologist who studied the dehumanizing impact of the industrial era, always striving to

analyze the human experience in a larger context. Goethe was also one of the first artists to combine science and literature with his writings.

Goethe died in Weimar, Germany in 1832, after publishing his six-volume autobiography.

About Illinois Wesleyan University

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,070 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts and a \$1.65 million baseball stadium. Construction is underway on a \$23 million library and \$6 million student center. *Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine* ranks Illinois Wesleyan University 12th among the nation's 1,600 private colleges in providing a top-quality education at an affordable cost. Also sharing IWU's ranks are Princeton and Dartmouth.